



**Morning Alert - Friday, May 19, 2017**

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## **HEADLINES**

### **Morning News**

NHK gave top play to a report that President Trump criticized the appointment of a special counsel to investigate the alleged collusion between his associates and Russian officials by saying on Twitter that it is “the single greatest witch hunt of a politician in American history.”

Other top news included reports that a car plowed into a crowd at Times Square on Thursday, killing one person and injuring 22 others, adding that the New York mayor told reporters there is no indication that it was an act of terrorism.

Asahi, Yomiuri, and Nikkei gave top play to reports on the appointment of former FBI Director Robert Mueller as a special counsel to investigate allegations regarding the Trump administration’s relations with Russia. Sankei led with a report that a Chinese drone flew over Chinese Coast Guard vessels sailing near the Senkaku Islands. The paper said the ASDF scrambled an F-15 fighter in response to the drone flight. Mainichi gave top coverage to a report on the Tokyo Metropolitan Government’s estimate that the 2020 Olympics will cost 1.39 trillion yen.

## **INTERNATIONAL**

### **Ambassador-nominee Hagerty expresses views on U.S.-Japan alliance, trade with Japan**

All papers reported on remarks made by Ambassador-nominee William Hagerty at a Senate confirmation hearing on Thursday. Asahi wrote that the Ambassador-nominee expressed his readiness to reduce the trade deficit with Japan by saying that he will strive to create additional

opportunities to expand U.S. firms' access to the Japanese market. Concerning the U.S.-Japan alliance, the Ambassador-nominee reportedly stated that the bilateral alliance is becoming increasingly important as it is facing new security challenges and that it is necessary for the U.S. to continue cooperating closely with Japan and South Korea in pressing the Kim Jong Un regime to abandon its nuclear program.

Yomiuri wrote that Hagerty expressed his readiness to make efforts to deepen the U.S.-Japan alliance by saying that the bilateral alliance is the cornerstone of peace and security in the Asia-Pacific region. He reportedly added that the United States' involvement is more critical than ever in the face of emerging security challenges, including North Korea's nuclear and missiles development and China's growing activities in the East and South China Seas. Quoting him as saying that the U.S. will enhance national interests through a bilateral framework, the daily wrote that the Ambassador-nominee expressed readiness to hold bilateral trade negotiations with Japan in place of the TPP.

Nikkei wrote that Hagerty expressed the view in a written statement to the Senate that there are structural trade barriers in auto trade between the U.S. and Japan. He also commented on the U.S.-Japan Economic Dialogue launched in April between Vice President Pence and Deputy Prime Minister Aso by saying that the dialogue is a tool to strengthen the bilateral framework for trade and investment.

Sankei wrote that the Ambassador-nominee underlined the United States' commitment to support Japan under the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty while closely watching China's activities around the Senkaku Islands.

An NHK reporter said Hagerty is expected to be approved by Congress soon and arrive in Japan as early as this summer, adding that he will work on preparing for President Trump's anticipated visit to Japan before the end of this year. The reporter said attention will be focused on whether Hagerty will become a tough negotiator in talks with Japan or try to build a win-win relationship. Fuji-TV and Kyodo News filed similar stories.

### **Ship begins regular service between North Korea and Russia**

Asahi, Mainichi, Yomiuri, and Sankei reported on the start of regular service of the Mangyongbong, a North Korean passenger-cargo ship, between North Korea and Russia. The ship arrived in Vladivostok on Thursday. The ferry will provide weekly service between Rajin in northeastern North Korea and Vladivostok. Yomiuri wrote that although the Putin administration is probably hoping to maintain its influence over the DPRK by expanding its relations with Pyongyang, the regular ferry service between the two nations may be used as a loophole in the UNSC's sanctions resolutions. Sankei wrote that the service demonstrates Moscow's conciliatory stance toward Pyongyang amid growing international pressure on the DPRK.

### **Japan to conclude agreement with Italy on defense technology transfer**

Asahi wrote that the GOJ has decided to conclude an agreement with Italy next week on the transfer of defense equipment and technology. Defense Minister Inada plans to give consent for the SDF's cooperation with the Italian military during a meeting with her Italian counterpart Pinotti in Tokyo on May 22. Italy will be the seventh nation with which Japan will conclude such an accord following such nations as the U.S., the UK, and France.

### **Japan, Poland agree to strengthen cooperation**

Yomiuri wrote that during a meeting at MOFA on Thursday, Foreign Minister Kishida and his Polish counterpart Waszczykowski signed a four-year action plan through 2020 to strengthen their nations' security and economic relations. The two officials also agreed to urge North Korea to refrain from conducting all kinds of provocations and take specific steps to abandon its nuclear programs.

## **ECONOMY**

### **TPP minister calls for Southeast Asian nations' understanding for "TPP 11"**

Nikkei wrote that during a meeting with the ambassadors of three Southeast Asian nations, Economic Revitalization Minister Ishihara stated that it is necessary for the 11 TPP nations to maintain their unity and agree on a clear direction for the future of the TPP. The paper speculated that the Japanese minister was calling for these nations' understanding for the "TPP 11" idea.

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